

**URBAN CORRIDORS OFFICE UPDATE**

**BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

**JUNE 2004 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING**

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Division

**PURPOSE:**

To update the Commission on the status of the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) and current strategies for the Urban Corridors Office (UCO) Projects.

**ACTION/OUTCOME:**

No action is required by the Commission.

**BACKGROUND:**

The 2002 Washington State Legislature authorized the creation of the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID). This funding mechanism allows King County, Pierce County and/or Snohomish County to form a funding district to raise revenues to make improvements to highways of statewide significance, approaches to highways of statewide significance, and a small percentage of off-system improvements. All three counties agreed to form a planning committee, made up of all the county council members in the 3-county area and led by ex-officio member Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald, to explore which taxes and projects could be funded and built. The Planning Committee is guided by a 7-member Executive Committee, with two council members from Snohomish and Pierce each, and three council members from King County. The Executive Committee spent most of 2003 developing a draft plan, but difficulties in King County and the results from public opinion polling in the fall of 2003 led the Executive Committee in December 2003 to postpone their release of a draft plan until more consensus was built in King County.

The RTID Executive Board adopted a revised plan at its April 29, 2004 meeting. The list of projects developed assumed that Sound Transit would join the RTID on a common ballot in November 2004. On May 20, 2004 the Sound Transit Board decided to not join the RTID for a common ballot measure at this time, but left the door open for future cooperative efforts. That fact, as well as recent polling information suggesting the RTID program of projects of tax increases wouldn't pass this November led the RTID Executive Board to postpone the RTID ballot measure to at least a May 2005 ballot, and possibly beyond.

The Executive Board's decision has been hailed by some as the end of the RTID. Others suggest that more time is necessary to educate the public on the benefits of the RTID proposal and that it is full speed ahead to a May ballot. Still others see the concept of regionalism as alive but needing substantial changes in governance, revenue options, and project eligibility to be implemented. And finally, some think regionalism is dead and the problems can only be solved in Olympia and Washington D.C. Regardless, the uncertainty of the future of the RTID has significant impacts on the projects in the Urban Corridors Office.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The uncertainty of RTID's future has both short-term and long-term implications for the projects under development in the Urban Corridors Office. Specifically, the theme of "financially constrained planning" needs to be incorporated into each of the corridors as short term and long term work plans are developed. Each project is discussed below:

Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seattle Seawall Project – The project has \$177 million of nickel funding over the next 10 years. Short-term efforts have and will continue to focus on completing the project's Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS issued March 2004), preliminary design and engineering, and early right of way acquisition. Without the anticipated RTID funding, however, funding from later biennia will need to be advanced into the 2005-2007 biennium to maintain the project's schedule. Over the long term, the project's finance plan, still very preliminary, is comprised of roughly equal parts of federal, state, and regional dollars, with additional contributions from local and private sources. Failure of a successful regional measure and its corresponding funding could significantly affect the financial viability of any of the project's alternatives.

SR 520 Bridge and HOV Replacement Project – The project has \$56 million of nickel funding over the next 10 years. Short-term efforts have and will continue to focus on completing the project's Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS due spring 2005), preliminary design and engineering, and early right of way acquisition. Without the anticipated RTID funding, however, funding from later biennia will need to be advanced into the 2005-2007 biennium to maintain the project's schedule. Over the long term, the project's finance plan, still very preliminary, is comprised of state, regional, and toll revenues. Failure of a successful regional measure and its corresponding funding could significantly affect the financial viability of any of the project's alternatives.

I-405 Congestion Relief and Transit Project – The project has \$485 million of nickel funding over the next 10 years plus some other federal funding for advance design work. Short-term efforts will continue to focus on environmental documentation and permitting, design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the three "nickel project's," spot congestion relief improvements on I-405 through Kirkland, South Bellevue, and South Renton. Some short-term efforts currently focused on implementation of larger corridor plans will be re-directed to nickel program work. Given the possibilities of funding availability over the long term, the grander vision adopted for the I-405 corridor will likely need to be re-shaped to be consistent with even our most optimistic revenue projections. A re-focusing on an RTID-like I-405 program plan over the longer term may be reasonable. Fortunately, this project lends itself fairly well to phased implementation

so if necessary, an incremental funding approach over time (combination of federal, state, and local) is viable. Much discussion is needed on project implementation changes and additional updates will follow.

SR 509/I-5 Congestion Relief and Freight Mobility Project – This project has \$35 million of nickel funding over the next 10 years. Short-term efforts will continue to focus on project design and critical right of way acquisition. The project's funding expires at the end of the 2005-2007 biennium. Additional funding will be required to continue work efforts on this corridor. Over the long term, if substantial regional funding is not available, various implementation strategies will be considered, including partial construction build outs and/or corridor right of way preservation approaches. Much discussion is needed on project implementation changes and additional updates will follow.

I-5 (Boeing Field to Northgate) and SR 167 (Renton to Auburn) Projects – For the short term, these projects both have nickel funding for corridor planning, environmental, and design work over the next 10 years. (Approximately \$10 million each for the planning and environmental work is available in the 2005-2007 biennium.) The I-5 project has approximately \$134 million of nickel funding available in the 2007-2009 and 2009-2011 biennia. Over the long term, additional funds may become available for these projects through federal, state, or regional funds. Efforts will be made as these projects are scoped and developed to assess likely funding scenarios and then constrain the planning efforts to ensure reasonable expectations are created with the public.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

No action is necessary.

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